



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



BLACK HILLS VETERANS MARCH

Test your endurance! Exercise your patriotism!

The Black Hills Veteran March is a picturesque trek through the mountainous terrain of the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. This march/marathon pays tribute to the many sacrifices that this nation's veterans have made in the past and continue to make today. The 26.2 and 16 mile races are September 18th and the 110 mile endurance races starts on September 15.

Visit blackhillsveteransmarch.org to learn more about the march or to register to participate.

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18TH ANNUAL Black Hills VETERANS MARCH AND MARATHON!

SEPTEMBER 15-18, 2021

THE BLACK HILLS VETERANS MARCH AND MARATHON IS AN ANNUAL TREK THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL TERRAIN OF THE BLACK HILLS OF SOUTH DAKOTA. BEGINNING IN THE MORNING, THIS EVENT OCCURS ALONG THE MICKELSON TRAIL AND TRAVELS THROUGH BLACK HILLS SITES, ENDING IN EXCITING DEADWOOD, SOUTH DAKOTA!

THIS MARCH AND MARATHON PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE MANY SACRIFICES THAT THIS NATION'S VETERANS HAVE MADE IN THE PAST AND CONTINUE TO MAKE TODAY...

TEST YOUR ENDURANCE!

EXERCISE YOUR PATRIOTISM!

REGISTER TODAY!!!

DIVISIONS ARE:

- MILITARY TEAM OR SOLO!
- CIVILIAN TEAM OR SOLO!
- HEAVY PACK CHALLENGE!

YOU CAN TAKE PART IN EVENTS LIKE:

- 110 MILE ENDURANCE!
- 26.2 MILE WALK/RUN/RELAY!
- 16 MILE WALK/RUN/RELAY!

POW!

BOOM!

JOHNSON JOINS SDDVA TEAM

Danny Johnson is the newest member to the SD Department of Veterans Affairs team. Danny is a state veterans service officer serving out of the Claims Office. His email address is: daniel.johnson11@va.gov.

Danny served eight years as a medic in the Air Force and got out as an E5. He was stationed in Colorado, South Korea, Italy, Afghanistan, and Mississippi.

Before joining the SDDVA team, Danny worked with QTC as a disability evaluation coordinator.

Please join us in welcoming Danny to our team.



SDNG SOLDIERS PERFORM KEY MISSION IN EAST AFRICA

South Dakota National Guard soldiers assigned to the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB), are deployed to Camp Lemonnier, as the core staff for Combined Joint Task force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA).

“The 196th MEB is the nucleus of Combined Joint Task force – Horn of Africa,” said Maj. Gen. Lapthe Flora, commanding general, CJTF - HOA. “Their mission is to support U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and forces here in East Africa.

AFRICOM’s mission is to counter transnational threats and malign actors, strengthen security forces, and respond to crises in order to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability, and prosperity.

“The MEB comprises 80 percent of the headquarters but the other 20 percent are individuals from around the country that bring the missing talent the headquarters needs to succeed,” said Col David Dailey, Commander, 196th MEB. “It is amazing what this diverse group of people can accomplish in this small area of Africa.”

This is the first time in the history of CJTF-HOA that the staff has been made up of primarily one unit.

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SDNG SOLDIERS PERFORM KEY MISSION IN EAST AFRICA (CONTINUED)

The 196th MEB brings many unique talents to CJTF-HOA that benefit day to day operations. The 196th MEB arrived in East Africa last September and began replacing individual augmentees on the CJTF-HOA staff.

The mission that the MEB has in East Africa is a unique and complex one, spread out across the entire region.

The 196th MEB has been at the center of everything strategic that is occurring in East Africa. If they were not executing it, they were planning it.

From the moment they arrived on ground, the MEB began planning and executing exercises for base defense. Three indirect fire drills were planned and conducted during the deployment.

In addition to exercises to enhance base defense, the MEB led a bunker hardening mission from January through April. During this time, the MEB along with other units at Camp Lemonnier filled thousands of sandbags and reinforced numerous bunkers.

One of the major responsibilities of CJTF-HOA is to maintain a ready East African Response Force (EARF). The MEB planned exercises, ensuring the EARF was ready to deploy to assist anywhere in Africa.

A major shift in U.S policy happened late in 2020 when President Donald Trump ordered the repositioning of all troops from Somalia. A large portion of the mission fell upon CJTF-HOA to complete in support of Special Operations Command Africa.



The MEB's mission took its members all over East Africa conducting training and surveys.

The crisis planning team conducted site surveys in several different countries including Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic; making sure that if the EARF had to deploy to these areas, they had a clear picture of what it would be like.

The MEB's presence in Africa did not stop in East Africa. Training was conducted as far west as Timbuktu, Mali.

The trip to Mali was no easy feat, troops and cargo had to be transported by air over 4,800 miles round trip.

While in Timbuktu, members of the MEB trained with French counterparts and conducted operational assessments.

Partnerships in East Africa is a priority and the MEB had continually fostered good relationships between the U.S. and its allies in the region.

There have been several exercises with the French, Italians, and Japanese; including casualty evacuation, artillery demonstrations and emergency response planning.

The 196th MEB also trained with our Djiboutian partners during the deployment. The signal section (J6) held a several month training that culminated in the first combined three-day exercise with the Djiboutian military. During this training they worked with a Djiboutian signal company on setting up signal equipment.

SDNG SOLDIERS PERFORM KEY MISSION IN EAST AFRICA (CONTINUED)

In February, the information operations cell hosted the first cyber-defense exchange between CJTF – HOA, the Djiboutian military and the French. This exchange allowed the partners to learn from each other the best practices for cyber security.

The MEB not only worked with partner nations while in Djibouti; they also worked closely with the State Department. The public affairs office and the information operations section attended weekly meetings with Ambassador Andre and Ambassador Prate, ensuring that communication between CJTF-HOA and the embassy is fluid.

The protocol section was busy throughout the deployment taking care of the commanding central's guests needs, but the tThanksgiving holiday was especially busy.

CJTF-HOA simultaneously hosted Gen. Stephen Townsend, the commanding general of AFRICOM and the Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller. This was quite a challenge, but once again, the MEB was up to the task.

No matter what the MEB did in Africa, there was always one constant – the presence of COVID-19. The 196th continued the mission despite the downgraded environment.

Even though COVID-19 changed the way business was conducted it never stopped the mission from getting done.

The MEB surgeon cell continued to support the mission while battling COVID-19. In early February, the first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine arrived on camp and the surgeon cell immediately worked on a plan and distributed vaccines, to everyone who elected to receive it, dramatically impacting the effect that COVID-19 had on the mission.

The 196th MEB left its mark and South Dakota's mark on CJTF-HOA and East Africa.

South Dakota soldiers shared a variety of South Dakota culture with the non-South Dakota members of CJTF-HOA.



SD ARMY NATIONAL GUARD NAMES WARRANT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota Army National Guard selected Chief Warrant Officer 4 Clinton Store as its Warrant Officer of the Year and recipient of the Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael F. O'Connor Award.

Store, who serves as an instructor for the Warrant Officer Candidate School with 1st Battalion, 196th Regional Training Institute in Sturgis, received the award as the most exceptional warrant officer after competing against warrant officers from several of the SDARNG's major commands.

The CW4 Michael F. O'Connor Award was established in 2000 to recognize the most outstanding SDARNG Warrant Officer of the past year. Criterion for the award is based on exceptional qualities of technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative.

"CW4 Store has been a member of the SDARNG for more than 20 years, with 28 years total (military) service. The experience and knowledge from his years of service definitely make him an asset to our regiment and the entire organization," said Col. Deb Bartunek, commander of the 196th Regiment (RTI).

Store enlisted in the Illinois National Guard in 1993 as a transport operator assigned to the 1-79th Infantry Battalion in Chicago. From 1995 to 2000, he served on active duty with units in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and at Fort Carson, Colorado. In 2000, Store transferred to the SDARNG's 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion as an information systems analyst.

In 2006, Store attended Warrant Officer Candidate School at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and later assigned as a signal warrant. From 2007 to 2019, he served in roles as an information systems analyst, technician, and a network systems manager for the SDARNG's Joint Force Headquarters, 115th Signal Company, 152nd Combat Sustainment

Battalion and 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

Store is also a combat veteran and deployed to Afghanistan from 2010 to 2011 with the 196th MEB.

In his civilian career, Store works for the U.S. Department of the Interior as a cyber-security specialist. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in computer information systems from Baker College and a Master of Science degree in cybersecurity from Dakota State University.



SD NATIONAL GUARD NAMES LIEUTENANT OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota National Guard selected 1st Lt. Andrew Dellman as its Lieutenant of the Year and recipient of the Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award.

Dellman, who serves as a full time intelligence officer with the 114th Operations Support Squadron in Sioux Falls, received the award as the most exceptional lieutenant after competing against officers from several of the SDNG's major commands.

The Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award was established in 1968 to annually recognize the most outstanding lieutenant in the SDNG based on the exceptional qualities of leadership, values and performance.

"Lieutenant Dellman is an immense talent and invaluable member of the 114th Fighter Wing," said Lt. Col. Jon Friedman, commander 114th Operations Support Squadron "He is a foundational officer and airman capable of serving and leading at the highest levels. It is a privilege to have him on my team and I expect nothing but great things from him throughout his career."

Dellman enlisted in the South Dakota Air National Guard in 2008 as an aircrew egress systems mechanic – achieving the rank of staff sergeant. In 2014, he began working for the SDANG as an accounting technician in the finance office. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 2017 after completing Total Force Officer Training and being assigned as an intelligence officer.

Dellman has served on multiple tours overseas, to include duty in South Korea in 2013 and he is currently deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Resolute Support. He also is a 2013 graduate of the University of South Dakota and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in history education. He spent several years teaching social studies and mathematics and coached boys basketball at Lyman High School in Presho.

Other officers representing their major command for this year's award competition were 1st Lt. Drew Gillogly from the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, and 1st Lt. Tyler Gregor from the 109th Regional Support Group.



SDNG SUPPORTS IHS/OST VACCINATION EVENTS ON PINE RIDGE

The South Dakota Army National Guard provided support to Indian Health Services and the Oglala Sioux Tribe during two COVID-19 vaccination events on the Pine Ridge Reservation, April 16-17.

IHS in partnership with the OST requested the support of the SDARNG for vaccination events in Kyle and Pine Ridge to create an additional opportunity for members of the community.

The SDARNG's 730th Area Support Medical Company out of Vermillion provided medical personnel to assist in administering the vaccine and to provide administrative support.

"It's nice to feel meaningful and that we're doing something good for the community, not just our own Guard members but for civilians as well – it's a good purpose," said Spc. Shelby Roda, a combat medic with the 730th.

Vaccines were available for residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation and patients of the Pine Ridge IHS Service Unit – aged 16 years and older. The events also included a health fair to offer information and provide small health program items for community members.

Events like these make the COVID-19 vaccine available for community members that may not be able to receive it yet elsewhere.

Providing community members the opportunity to improve and learn about their wellbeing has multiple effects on overall health.



"The more people we can vaccinate and bring in to educate on the scientific facts, the better we can stop COVID-19," said Maj. Josh Paull, a physician's assistant for Medical Command, SDARNG. "COVID-19 has obviously impacted the physical health of our communities, but it's also had devastating effects on the mental health of many. By offering vaccines and a path to normal, it not only helps the health of our communities but also the mental health by bringing us back together."

ACCOMPLISHED AVIATOR RETIRES FROM SDNG AFTER 34 YEARS OF SERVICE

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Michael Reindl retired from the South Dakota Army National Guard after 34 years of distinguished service as an Army aviator.

Reindl's career culminated as the SDARNG's aviation standardization officer, where he demonstrated outstanding professional skill, knowledge, and leadership as a helicopter pilot and in aviation operations.

During his career, Reindl was rated in three different airframes: UH-1 H/V Iroquois, H-60 Black Hawk A/L/M models and the LUH-72A Lakota helicopter. He flew a total of 6,066 flight hours, including 150 imminent danger and 90 combat hours.

Reindl held a number of flight duties including pilot-in-command, instructor pilot, instrument flight examiner, standardization officer and functional check pilot, making him a subject matter expert in aviation operations and instrumental in developing programs for SDARNG aviation units.

Reindl developed wildland fire and hoist training programs that have been adopted by South Dakota and other surrounding states, which has led to some of the most competent air crews in the U.S. Army.

Reindl has been vital in supporting a number of state active duty missions over his career, responding to over 75 wildland fires, 11 search and rescues, three floods, and two tornadoes. His response to these missions resulted in lives saved and critical supplies delivered to disaster areas in support of the citizens of South Dakota. He also supported several missions to aid law enforcement and counterdrug agencies to help keep South Dakota drug free.

Reindl has also served overseas four times in support of various humanitarian and combat operations. He has been deployed to provide humanitarian aid on three separate occasions: Operation Fuetos Caminos, Panama in 1993, providing support to U.S. forces stabilizing the area; Operation Joint Forge, Bosnia in 2002, providing medical evacuation to U.S. and NATO troops throughout the region; and Operation New Horizons, Nicaragua in 2009, providing general support and medical evacuation for Task Force Red Horse

while they built schools, drilled wells and re-built roads.

In 2011, he was deployed in support of combat operations in Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn from 2011-2012. There he provided medical evacuation operations for U.S. and coalition troops.



MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT UPDATE

The Honor Flight Network has released a statement that will be of interest to veterans and guardians on Midwest Honor Flight waitlist, as well as to the volunteers. While 2021 Honor Flights remain postponed nationwide until at least August 15, the Honor Flight Network has announced that, once it has been determined that it is safe to resume flights, proof of full vaccination will be required for veterans and their guardians who take an Honor Flight in 2021. Mandatory vaccination will be just one of the safety measures that will be implemented.

Veterans who choose not to be vaccinated (or who are not able to be vaccinated) will remain on the "fly list" until the Honor Flight Network removes this mandatory safety measure and will then be added to flights in the order that their applications were received (as usual). Guardians and volunteers who travel with veterans will also be required to present proof of vaccination before flight day and bring their vaccination proof along on flight day for any flights that take place in 2021. The Honor Flight Network stated that there will be no exceptions to this rule.

While we do not yet have information about when or how the proof of vaccination will need to be submitted or presented, we wanted the veterans and guardians on the fly list to know about this requirement with plenty of time to plan for compliance. "Fully vaccinated" is defined by the Honor Flight Network as having received the second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine at least two weeks prior to the flight date or the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine 28 days prior to the flight. There is no information yet about "boosters" or whether or not those might be required in the future.

"Our first priority on every Midwest Honor Flight Mission is the safety of our veterans, guardians, and crew," says Aaron Van Beek, the President of Midwest Honor Flight. "Should we have the chance to fly this fall, we will be implementing these precautions alongside the Honor Flight Network so we can continue to carry out our Mission without forcing veterans to choose between their health and this once-in-a-lifetime experience."

The Honor Flight Network's Board of Directors and Midwest Honor Flight's Board of Directors will continue to consult public health guidance before officially resuming trips and announcing final protocols. Veterans and families with questions about the COVID-19 vaccines are encouraged to watch a free, live webinar hosted by the Honor Flight Network on May 6 at 6:00 PM Central Time. The webinar will include a presentation by Dr. Jane Kim, Chief Consultant for Preventive Medicine at the VA's National Center for Health Promotion and Prevention. A webinar link has been posted to www.honorflight.org for registration. Click here to [register](#).



SFVAHCS CAREGIVER SUPPORT SUMMIT

The Sioux Falls VA is excited to welcome local agencies to their first annual Caregiver Support Summit! This face to face event will take place at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W Russell Street in Sioux Falls) on Wednesday, May 26, from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm (CT).

The Caregiver Summit is an opportunity for the VA and community partners to join together to share information and resources as well as identify services in the caregiver support community that will assist in enhancing support for caregivers and families of veterans. The Summit will provide opportunities to work together to create new conversations around providing services that caregivers need the most in order to take care of veterans, their families, and themselves and will provide an opportunity to collaborate and build shared resources to sustain our continued commitment while ensuring the best care.

The theme for this year's Caregiver Summit is *"Inclusive Care: Empowering & Engaging Caregivers as Partners in Care"*, a national initiative created by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and the VA.

Due to continued Covid-19 precautions, SFVAHCS is only allowing two representatives per agency to be present to display and share information about their services. Masks will be required, and social distancing protocols will be followed.

If you would like to take part in this exciting event and learn more about what services the VA has to offer as well as share your own, please confirm your registration by contacting **Nic Brokenleg** at **605-336-3230 Ext 5018** or by email at Nicholas.Brokenleg@va.gov Spots are limited!

[Click here to learn more about the Inclusive Care Campaign.](#)

HONORING OUR HEROES

Our team at the SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office sent birthday greetings to WWII Veteran Leonard Weber of Sioux Falls. Leonard celebrated his 100th birthday this week. SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard delivered the card to Leonard and shared in his celebration.



UPCOMING EVENTS

May 15—LCPL Conrad Flying Horse Bridge Dedication—McIntosh High School Football Field—10:00 am (MT)
 May 31—State Veterans Cemetery Memorial Day Program and Ribbon Cutting—2:00 pm (CT)
 Jun 1—PVT David Crow and PVT Dale Crow Bridge Dedication—Bison High School—2:00 pm (MT)
 Jun 13—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—Begins at Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)—Registration 12:30 pm (CT) and ride begins at 2:30 pm (CT)
 Jun 17-20—VFW 91st State Convention—Kelly Inn (1607 E. HWY 50)—Yankton
 June 24-27—American Legion State Convention—Crossroads (100 4th ST SW)—Huron
 Jul 21—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Military Heritage Alliance Building—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
 Aug 16-18—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Aug 23—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser at Barrel House—Sioux Falls (4701 E. 54th Street)
 Oct 23—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)



HONOR RIDE
MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

"RIDING TO KEEP THEM FLYING"

Sunday, June 13, 2021 | 2:30 PM

Registration begins at 12:30 PM at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance. Honor a Veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. Ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before an escort to the new South Dakota State Cemetery.

MORE INFORMATION & PRE-REGISTRATION:
MIDWESTHONORFLIGHT.ORG/RIDE

Midwest Honor Flight is a 100% volunteer organization. All proceeds from this event go directly towards future Honor Flight and more importantly, our local Veterans.

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